

A GUIDE
TO
BELUR



BANGALORE:

ED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT
AT THE GOVT. PRESS

1937

A GUIDE TO BELUR

PUBLISHED FOR
THE GOVERNMENT OF MYSORE

BY

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A GUIDE TO BELUR

Bēlūr is now a small town in the Hāssan District of the Mysore State. It is situated about 25 miles to the north-west of Hāssan, a station on the Mysore-Arsikere branch of the Mysore State Railways. The other railway station from which Bēlūr can be reached is Bāṇāvar on the Bangalore-Harihar line from which Halebīḍ is about 18 miles and Bēlūr is 28 miles south-west. A new road enables the visitor to motor through Sāligāme and Halebīḍ to Bēlūr. Public roads suitable for motor cars connect Bēlūr with the railway stations, while public buses ply between these places every morning and evening and meet the railway trains. Bēlūr could also be approached by road from Chikmagalūr which is close to the beautiful Bābūbuḍan range and is directly accessible by road from the industrial town of Bhadrāvati or from Kaḍūr, both of which are railway stations. (See map at end.)

Bēlūr has a convenient second class travellers' bungalow with a garage for the use of visitors. It has two kitchen blocks in the Indian style and its *matee* can arrange for refreshments in the European style. A certified guide trained by the Archaeological Department is available at Bēlūr. Visitors are recommended to make use of his services by paying a small fee.

The Bābūbuḍan range which is visible from Bēlūr gives rise to a river called the Yagachī which almost separates the

western or Maīnāḍ tracts with their tall forests and coffee plantations from the eastern or Maīdān country with its drier climate and its scrub-covered hills. Round about Bēlūr is a rice producing low country on either bank of the river. Bēlūr is 3,282 feet above sea level.

An important ford across the river was, in former times, the chief means of communication between the western and eastern tracts.

Brief History of Belur. Close to it, on the western bank of the river, grew up the village of Bēlūr about a thousand years ago. Shortly after 1100 A.D. a Hoysaḷa king, Ballāḷa I by name, made it his capital. His able brother, Viṣṇuvardhana, popularly known as Biṭṭiga, succeeded to power in about 1106 A.D. He was converted to intense faith in Viṣṇu by the great saint and philosopher, Rāmānujāchārya. He made war upon the Chōḷas who were the enemies of his state and of his religious preceptor, took their provincial capital Talkāḍ in 1116, and drove them out of the Kannaḍa country. In commemoration of his victory, Viṣṇuvardhana built several temples for Viṣṇu in various parts of his state. The largest and the most beautiful of these was the temple of Vijaya-Nārāyaṇa at Bēlūr dedicated to Viṣṇu in the form of Kēśava. About a generation later, the capital was changed to Halebīḍ, 9 miles to the north-east and Bēlūr became a sub-capital.

The Bēlūr temple has a very large number of inscriptions which give us a tolerably good idea of the history of the buildings. Inscriptions on the pedestal of the Vijayanārāyaṇa image and on the west wall of the north wing of the *navaraṅga* hall inform us that the temple was constructed and the image was set up by Viṣṇuvardhana in 1117 A.D. The wall inscription and a set of copper-plates belonging to

the same temple describe in a grand and classical Kannaḍa prose style the construction of the building and eulogize the king, the queen, the temple and the god. Tradition states that a great Karnāṭaka architect, Dakaṇāchārya, was responsible for designing the temple, building it and carving its chief images single-handed. Historically, nothing is known of this great man, and the numerous signed sculptures of the temple show that their authors were Dāsōja of Belgāmi, his son Chāvaṇa, Nāgōja of Gadag, Masaṇa of Lakkunḍi and others who appear to have been immigrants from the Chāḷukyan country which formed the north and west of the Kannaḍa country. When Viṣṇuvardhana set up the image of Vijaya-Nārāyaṇa, his chief queen, the talented lady Śāntalādēvī, got a smaller temple erected on the right for the same god Kēśava. This is now known as the Kappe-Chennigarāya temple.

As designed and completed in 1117 A.D., the Chenna-kēśava temple consisted of a star-shaped sanctum opening on the east by means of a beautiful doorway into a large pillared pavilion shaped like an indented square. The eastern side of the pavilion was open and let in plenty of light and air which enabled the worshippers to appreciate the beauty of the sculptural work inside the temple. But some generations later, for greater security, the pavilion was provided with pierced stone windows and doorways. These latter, as also the compound wall, kitchen, granary and pond of the temple were added in the reign of Ballāḷa II. During the reign of Mohamed-Bin-Tughlak the temple was raided and its main gateway was burnt down by a Moslem général by name Gaṅgu Sālār. A generation later, some officers of the Vijayanagara Empire renovated the temple and built its lofty brick gōpura or gate tower. The tower of

the main temple which was of wood, brick and mortar was rebuilt several times. The last reconstruction was by a Hindu officer of Hyder Ali on behalf of Mahārāja Krishnarāja II of Mysore in 1774 A.D.

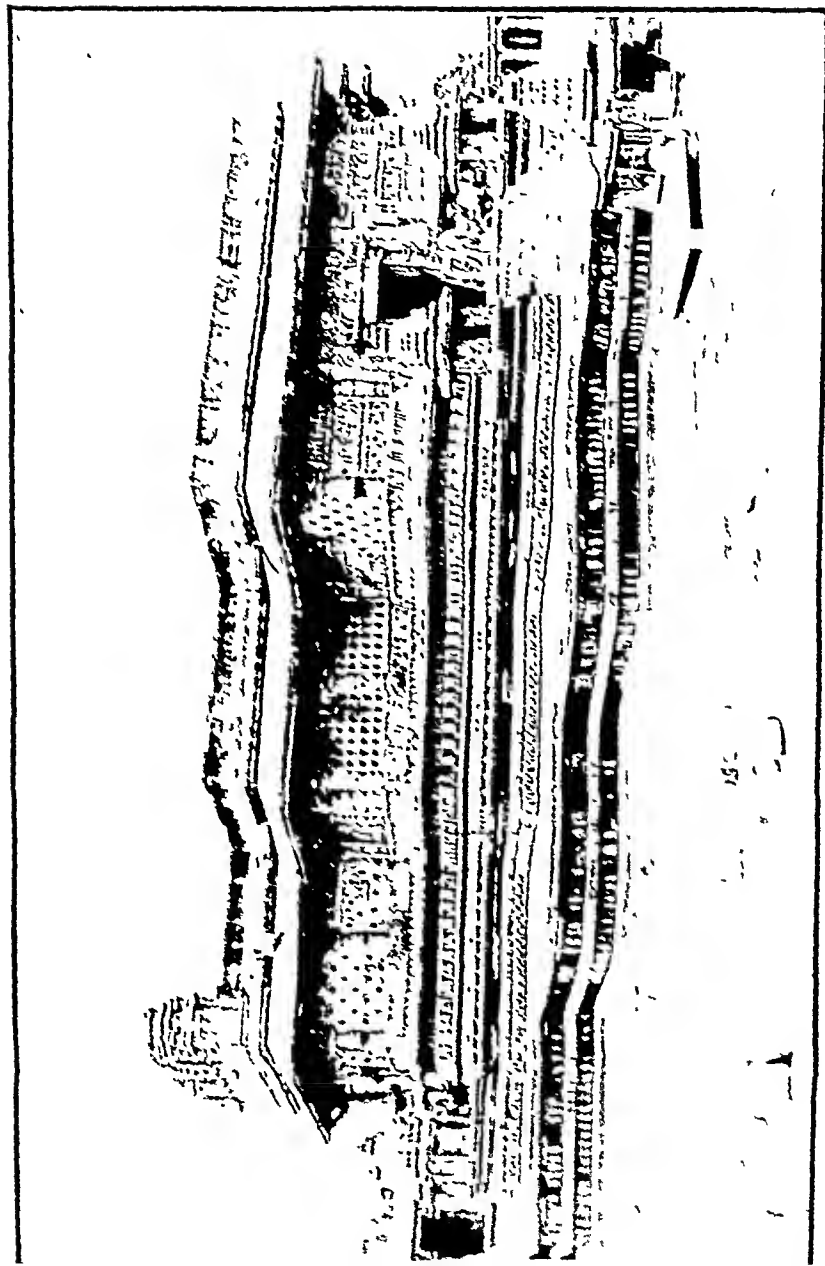
It was in the Vijayanagar period, again, that the temples of the two goddesses as also the front pavilion known as Nāganāyakana-maṇṭapa were constructed out of the materials obtained from the ruined Hoysala temples of the neighbourhood. In the 17th century, Bēlūr was once again prosperous between 1646 and 1666 during which period Srī Ranga Rāya III, the last emperor of the Vijayanagar Empire, made it his capital. With the fall of that power Bēlūr sank into the position of a small provincial town. The compound of the temple, which had become a maze of rotive buildings and champaka and coconut trees, became overgrown with vegetation and fell into disrepair and neglect. During the late Moslem days, it is said that a Bijāpuri governor held court in the hall of the temple, the doorway of the vestibule leading to the sanctum being walled up. Hindu vandals too did considerable damage to the temple, and the Mahrattas carried off the gold gilt copper sheets which covered some of the inner parts. In the days of Hyder Ali, the main vimāna tower was rebuilt and a golden kalāśa was set up on it on behalf of the Mahārāja of Mysore. In the eighties of the last century, the ruined vimāna tower was dismantled and the main temple was saved from immediate collapse.

The temple of Chennakēśava is typical of the Hoysala school of architecture which branched

General Description. off from the Chālukyan style after the middle of the 11th century A.D. It is built on a five feet high platform which runs around the temple closely following its contour. The chief interest in the plan

of the temple consists in the fact that the sanctum has a beautifully designed star shape while the hall is like a cross. (Pl. I, *frontispiece*.) This bold plan gives the building tastefully broken frontages with well-placed vertical lines of light and shade. These vertical lines are met by horizontal ones formed by the deep cuttings which throw into vivid relief the long and varied cornices which are a feature of the style. The front wall which can be divided into the basement, the railing and the pierced screens is ornamented with numerous friezes of sculpture (Pl. II), while on the back wall the rows of relievo canopies and the images placed below them are the chief objects of interest.

The temple is so full of sculptural work in nearly every part of it that the individual sculptures
 Artistic Greatness. found in the temple number several thousands. Many of these deserve close and detailed study while the best of them could perhaps be reckoned as real masterpieces. After seeing the temple and its sculptures, one gets the impression that it is almost a museum of art. While the building as a whole is beautifully and boldly designed, its fine and delicate sculptural work adds to it a romantic grandeur. Instead of the profuse ornamentation proving to be an overburden, it has added exquisite loveliness to the architectural majesty of the temple. The general effect upon the feelings could perhaps be described as being similar to that produced by an exhibition of jewellery work on a gigantic scale. Fergusson says: "The amount of labour, indeed, which each facet of this porch displays is such as, I believe, never was bestowed on any surface of equal extent in the world; and though the design is not of the highest order, it is elegant and appropriate and never offends against good taste."



SOUTH-EAST VIEW.

Each of the basement friezes has its own peculiar interest.

The lowest containing many hundreds of caparisoned elephants on the march shows these large and graceful animals

Basement Friezes.

in various moods and postures. Some are running, some fighting, while the larger number of them are in attitudes of peaceful and lively playfulness. The ornamental scroll bands, several of which appear on the front wall, are a study by themselves. In their artistic convolutions are placed gods, men and animals in various poses; dancers, hunters, musicians and the like are carved on a miniature scale. It is doubtful if some of these figures do not deserve criticism, but as ornamental designs these scroll bands have a pleasing effect on the artistic mind. Two rows of sculptures which adorn the back of the inner benches contain, among the images of many kinds, a large number of feminine figures placed under arches formed by creepers. Some of these show the toilet of a beautiful damsel and her dance. In a large number of cases the figures could be identified as those of Mōhinī, a feminine incarnation of Vishṇu. When the terrible giant, Bhasmāsura, burnt down sages and saints, women and children into ashes by laying his charmed hand on their heads, Vishṇu took the form of a maiden of ravishing beauty who sang and danced with a fascinating abandon. The giant too was tempted to dance and was burnt down to ashes when he placed his hand upon his own head in the course of dancing. The artists imagined in their own minds the attitudes and poses of Mōhinī and have preserved their grace and beauty in these sculptures.

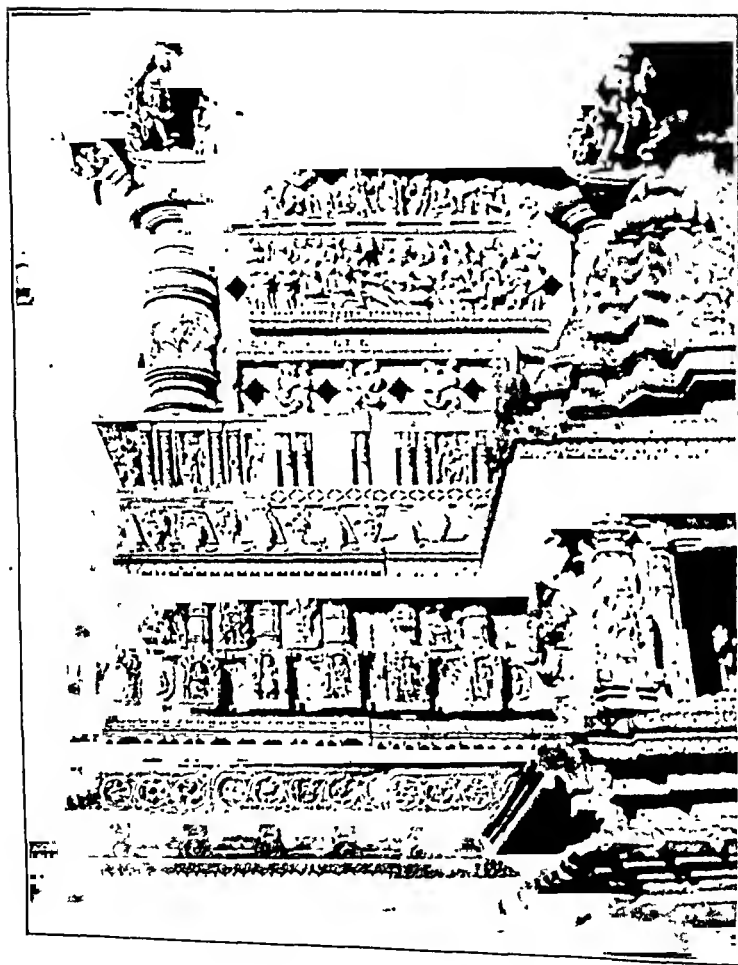
Above the dancing images runs a deep cornice which is surmounted by a row of ornamental towers with rearing lions in the inter-spaces and an artistic creeper close to

Railings.

edge. From the creeper at regular intervals spring up flowers bearing highly interesting sculptures in the round, illustrating the Rāmāyaṇa and other myths and legends. Above these turrets is a slanting railing whose outer face is divided by elegant pilasters into narrow panels. On these latter are sculptured in miniature numerous scenes from the Mahābhārata, some of which deserve detailed study.

Between the railings and the beams supporting the roof are rows of bell-shaped pillars between which
 Pierced Stone Screens. were inserted in about 1175 A.D. the stone screens. These latter are pierced by numerous squarish holes and the remaining surfaces of the screens are carved over with ornamental designs and figure-sculptures. Perhaps the most interesting of the sculptured groups is the one in the middle panel of the first screen to the south of the east doorway (Pl. III). Here we see a cushioned seat borne on a floor and supported by rearing lions. On it is seated a king holding a durbār. His long hair, trimmed beard and twirled moustaches and peculiar old type dress and ornamentations show us how kings were dressing in the Hoysala period. The figure has been identified as that of Vishṇuvar-dhana Hoysala, the builder of the temple. To his left on a similar seat is his consort, evidently the talented lady Śāntalādēvi. Her hair is tied up in a peculiar butterfly knot and in addition to the usual dress and ornamentation, she wears ornamented shorts and heavily tasselled waist belts which are exposed to view since the upper cloth has fallen down to her knees. She is listening holding betel leaves in her hands. To the right of the king are seated his teachers or ministers, the chief of whom is explaining something to which the royal couple are intently listening. Around are the guards and attendants of the royal pair. The whole scene is typical of a Hindu court and the queen's association with the king in a public durbār is noteworthy.

PLATE III



PIERCED STONE SCREEN.

the temple has a star-shaped exterior, there is reason to think that the original tower was similar in design to these smaller ones though its size was suitably very large.

Sala group.—The groups beside the doorway show the heroism of the mythical ancestor of the Hoysalas. When a monk was attacked by a tiger near the town of Aṅgaḍi or Śaśakapura, he cried out to *Sala Hoy Sala* or 'Slay Sala'. Sala fought the tiger and slew it, winning for his family the surname Hoysala. The animal which is described as a tiger is generally shown in the sculptures as a full-maned lion.

Durbar of Vishnuvardhana.

Bracket images.—

- (1) Beauty and the mirror—described already.
- (2) The pet parrot.

(SOUTH-EAST.)

Mohini frieze.—Damsel at toilet and dance.

Railing.—Scenes from the Mahabharata. The panels showing how Arjuna rescued the cows of Virāṭa are highly interesting. The miniature figures are skilfully carved.

Bracket figures in order.—

- (3) Vasanta.—A lady preparing to syringe rose-coloured water upon her lover.
- (4) Beauty and the parrot.
- (5) Modesty and the monkey.
- (6) The huntress.—A remarkable pose for the expression of the Hindu ideal of the feminine form.
- (7) Coiffeure.—A lady dressing her hair.
- (8) The drum dance.
- (9) Durga.
- (10) The drum dance.

- (11) A boy dancing and playing on a flute.— The figure represented is probably Kṛishṇa as a boy, brought up as a cowherd.

(SOUTH.)

The south doorway, now known as the Friday doorway (*Śukravārada-bāgīlu*) is surrounded by a number of fine sculptures. On the pierced screen to its east is graphically represented the story of the persecution of saint Prahāda. The boy who was a great devotee of Viṣṇu was mercilessly persecuted by his own father, the demon Hiranyakaśipu. Viṣṇu appeared as the Man-Lion or Narasimha, slew the father and rescued the saint.

Bracket Figures.—

- (12) The Song.—A damsel singing with her mouth just open, giving a glimpse of her fine teeth.
- (13) The Dance.—The pose is that of Mōhinī at the end of her dance with Bhaṣmāsura. She has just placed her right hand on her head. Bhaṣmāsura imitated the pose and was burnt down to ashes. On the finely chiselled creeper arch to the left of the dancer's head, a fly sits on a small jack fruit and an inch away is a lizard crouching to spring on its prey.

(SOUTH-WEST.)

Railing.—A royal couple in full court witnessing a wrestling match.

Bracket Figures.—

- (14) The vina dance.—The damsel is giving a graceful exposition by dance of the song she has played on the vīṇā. This old type vīṇā is known as Rudra-vīṇā.

The Sarasvatī-vīṇā which is now in general use is a later invention.

(15) Damsel admiring her curls. .

(16) Lady plucking fruit.

(17) The Huntress.—She wears a petticoat of leaves.

(18) A drummer.

The outer wall of the sanctum is built on an unique star-shaped plan and the latter appears to have been carried right up to the top of the original tower. On the south, west and north of the sanctum, are three large towered niches each with two floors. . Some of the images of these and other smaller towers around the temple have now disappeared.

The back wall of the temple has a row of ornamental arches under which are carved reliefs. Some wall reliefs. images of numerous deities. Some of these are various forms of Viṣṇu while others represent Śiva and other deities. Some of the interesting sculptures are :

Harihara standing with bull on the right and Garuḍa on the left.

Śiva overcoming the demon Jalandhara whom he lifts up with the point of his trident.

Kali dancing.

Parasurama with the battle axe—a rare figure.

The legend of Vamana.—To rid the world of the rule of the demons, Viṣṇu appeared as a dwarf. He took the gift of the three worlds from the generous demon king Bali and banished the latter and his following to the underworld.

Ravana.—This king of Lanka lifted up the mount Kailāsa to extort a boon from Śiva. The mountain is a typical example of miniature sculpture and is elaborately carved with tiny figures descriptive of Kailāsa with Śiva and Pārvatī holding court near

the top. Above the line of Nāgas or cobras is a thick forest in which can be distinguished different varieties of trees and also animals like snakes, monkeys, deer, lions and elephants. There is a long-necked animal looking like a giraffe which is only half an inch tall. Further up are the sages, gods and the attendants of Śiva. The whole forms an impressive piece of sculpture teeming with life.

Dakshabrahma with a ram's head.

Mahishasura-mardini.—The goddess is slaying a buffalo-headed demon.

Varaha.—Vishṇu as an anthropoid boar rescues the abducted earth goddess from her prison under the sea.

Gadadhara.—A form of Viṣṇu rare in South India.

Narasimha.—The terrible Man-Lion tearing the abdomen of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu. The god is in a terrific pose and the group is full of vigour and action.

Mother and child.—Probably Yaśōdā and Kṛishṇa.

Sūrya-Narayana.—The Sun-God is emerging from the clouds which cover him up to the knees. The seven horses of his chariot are driven by Aruṇa, the thighless brother of Garuḍa the bird vehicle of Viṣṇu.

(NORTH-WEST.)

Cupid and consort.

Arjuna.—The hero of the Mahābhārata is looking down into a dish of oil and shooting an arrow at the eye of a fish placed high above his head on a pillar. Thus he won the hand of the princess Draupadī. The figure is much damaged by wanton boys hitting it with stones for its metallic sound.

There are many interesting and graceful figures in the dancing frieze, specially those of Mōhinī at a dance.

Bracket Figures.—

- (19) Lady dancing.
- (20) Lady singing.
- (21) Dancing.
- (22) Durga dancing.

(NORTH.)

- (23) Huntress with her bag.
- (24) Drum dance.
- (25) Mohini at dance.—For elegance and delicacy of carving, this is one of the best bracket figures.
- (26) Beauty and the scorpion.—A lady wringing a scorpion out of her dress. A novel idea, which gives the sculptor an opportunity to carve an ideal body.

The north door is popularly known as the Heavenly Doorway and on either side of it, there are numerous interesting sculptures. Just behind the Śaṣa group on its west in the creeper scroll, is shown the story of the swans flying up with the tortoise, evidently illustrative of one of the fables of the Pañchatantra.

(NORTH-EAST.)

- (27) Lady giving an exhibition of the art of gesture.—Sculptor, Chakkappa.
- (28) Lady in the part of Śārādā.
- (29) The fan dance.
- (30) Dance with Nagavina. This instrument is now obsolete.
- (31) Lady admiring a ring. Sculptor, Māyappa.
- (32) The flute dance. A very attractive pose. Sculptor, Malliappa.
- (33) The drum dance. Sculptor, Mallappa.
- (34) Beauty and the monkey.

(35) **The toe ring.**—A royal lady is getting a ring put on her toe by an attendant. Her attempt to balance herself on one leg forms a graceful pose.

(36) **The drummer.**

Many interesting sculptures are found among the railings on the north-east. On one panel we have the **Chain of destruction**. A boar is half swallowed by a python which is trodden upon by a tusker elephant. A lion attacks the elephant, but is in turn caught in the jaws of a Śarabha, a mythical gryphon whose hind parts are held in the beaks of the double-headed bird, Gaṇḍabheruṇḍa, itself a minor incarnation of Viṣṇu. The whole chain is suspended in the air and a bearded man looks on with wonder.

Pierced Screen ; Viṣṇu as Anantasayana.—Viṣṇu floats on the milky ocean, reclining upon Ananta, the seven-hooded cobra.

Bracket Figures.—

(37) **The song.**—A beautiful musician is singing with cymbals in her hands. Her mouth is slightly open and she wears a lovely smile. We feel as if we hear her song. This is one of the best pieces among the bracket figures.

(38) **The Lasya dance.**—The damsel is keeping time with her left foot which is slightly raised. The flowering creeper over her head with a finely worked bee sucking honey from the flower is an admirable piece.—
Sculptor, Nāgōja of Gadag.

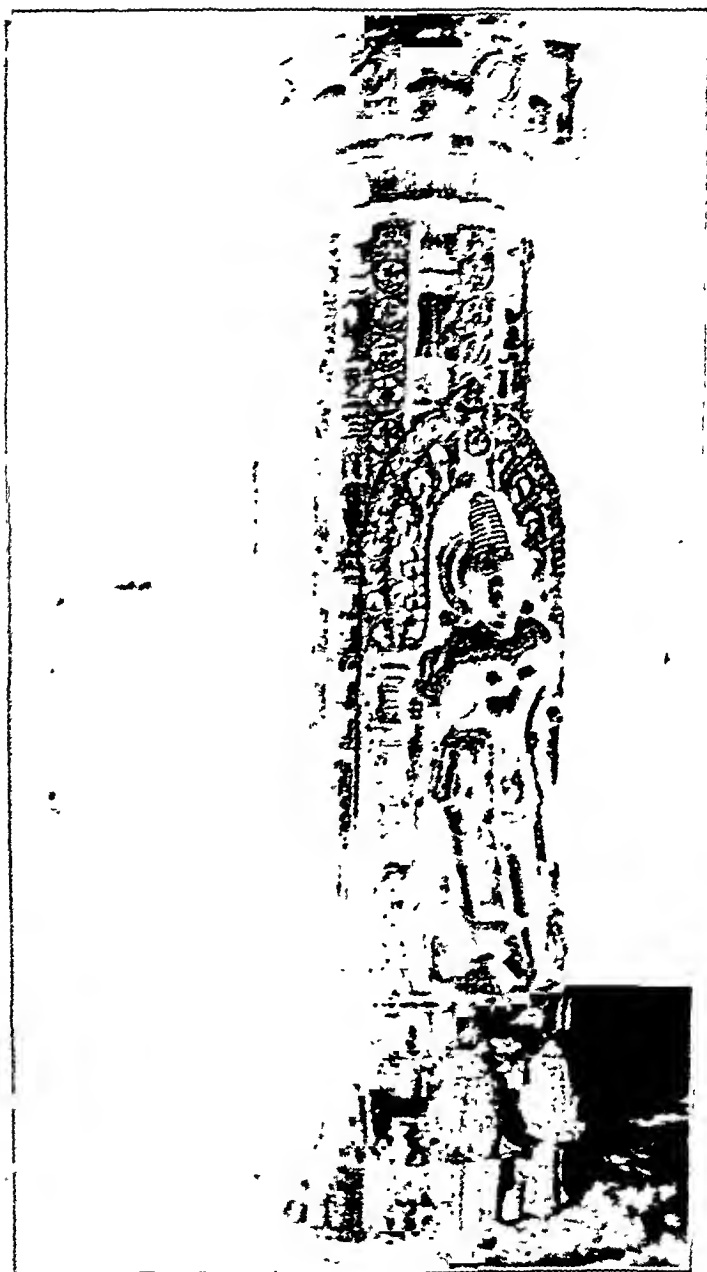
The doorways of the temple are remarkably well designed.

Doorways. Though not the best of them, the eastern doorway is admirable. It is guarded by Cupid and his consort each

flanked by a doorkeeper. On the lintel between two profusely tailed makaras (or mythical trunked crocodiles) is a panel with a flying Garuḍa. Above this Garuḍa there is a slab bearing one of the most elegant and delicate carvings in the temple. In its centre is seated the Man-Lion tearing out the entrails of Hiranyakaśipu. Above the god and with a lion face on the keystone, the floral and serpentine arches give us an example of the excellence of Hoysala fligree work. At the back of the sculpture is an equally wonderful, though somewhat mutilated, group which can be seen with lamp light from inside the doorway. Its subject is the story of the *Pārijāta-haraṇa* when Kṛishṇa defeated Indra and secured the heavenly Pārijāta flower.

The first object of interest inside the *navaranga* hall is a colossal pair of sandals presented to the god by the cobbler community. Ever since the days of Śrī Rāmānujāchārya and at his desire, the untouchable classes of Hindus have had permission to enter the hall and view the main image at worship during the annual festival season. Bēlūr, Sāligrāma and Mēlukōṭe are the only three places in the Mysore State where this privilege is continuing. It is said that the God is not pleased unless the lowest born come and worship him.

The pillars of the hall have extraordinary beauty and variety of design. Whether their plan is square, octagonal, twelve-sided, sixteen-sided, thirty-two-sided, round, lotus-shaped, star-shaped, fluted or banded, they are all most elegantly carved. Two specially noteworthy pillars are the Narasimha pillar on the south-east of the central square and the Mōhini pillar (Pl. IV) on its south-west. The Narasimha pillar used formerly to be turnable on its own axis.



hall have a variety of exquisite design.

The ceilings of the The finest of these is the magnificent

central dome (Pl. V) which is 13 feet

Ceilings. square and about 20 feet high. It is

beautifully polished bell-shaped pillars, each

supported on four beautiful bracket figure. The latter may be noted

of which bears a fine line in the south-east and running clockwise.

below commencing from the south-east and running clockwise.

Two large mirrors are kept in the temple for reflecting sunlight

into the dark inner recesses.

(1) Beauty and the parrot.—The pet bird is perched on

her left elbow and has caught in his beak the jewelled

necklace of the lady. The latter wears on her right

arm a bracelet which can be moved up and down

to the length.—On her diadem is a small bar on

(2) Lady dancing, ring can be freely moved. On the

which a tiny number of monkeys and birds (Pl. VI).

creeper are a

(3) Lady dancing, her hair. — Her pose is graceful.

(4) Lady dressing of the creeper, two monkeys appear to

Near the top, have a conversation (Pl. VII).—Sculptor,

be in affectionate conversation.

Dāsōja of Balakrishna, rises the magnificent

Above the beams of the architraves, rises the magnificent

dome bearing frieze of sculptures among which

may be distinguished several scenes from the Mahābhārata.

In the centre of the dome is a large ornate pendant at the

lower end of which is a round panel with the Man-Lion in

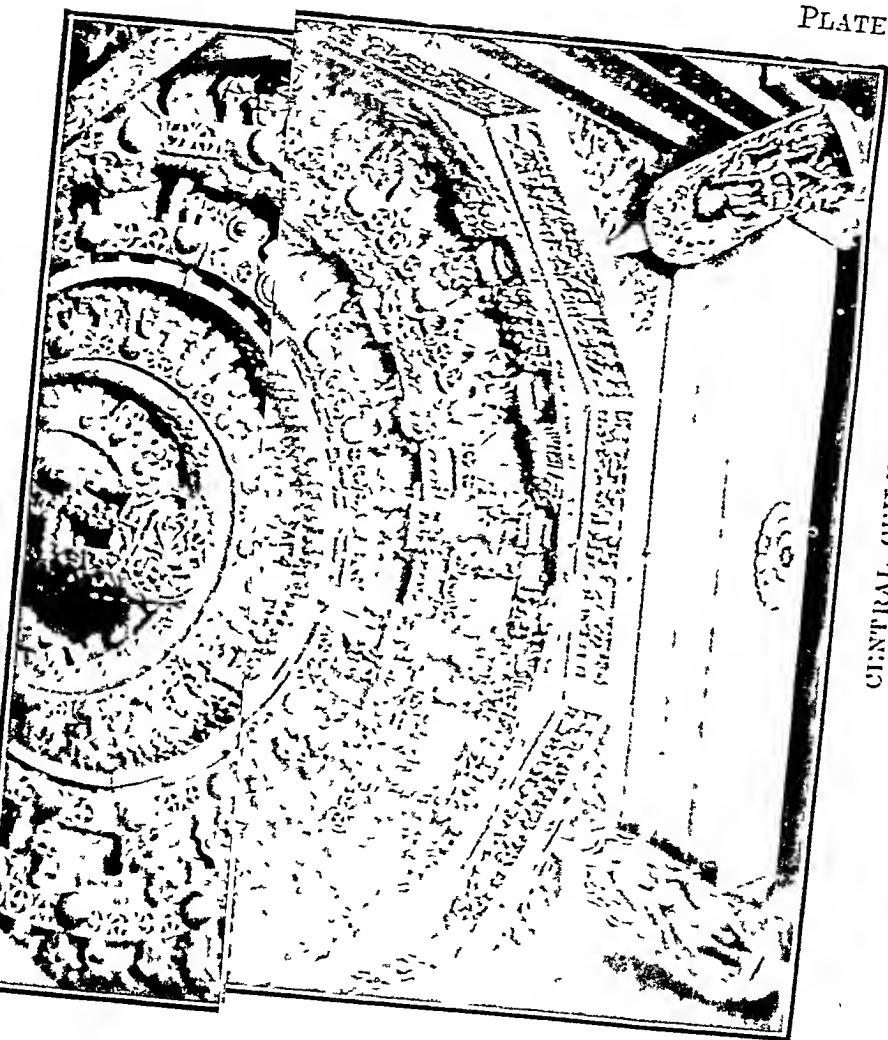
terrible action. The north-west wall of the hall bears the long

7) Kannaḍa inscription which commemorates the construction of

the temple. On the face of the stone bench on the south-west

of the hall is a frieze

Rāmāyaṇa story.



CENTRAL CEILING

The doorway of the vestibule is supported by colossal and life-like doorkeepers and has on the lintel an elaborately designed sculpture. Between the makaras and under the arches are seated Lakshmi and Nārāyaṇa. Underneath them is a unique stone ventilator, the railings of which are carved into the shapes of dancers and drummers and plantain buds. The doorway of the sanctum is of a different and more ancient design bearing on the jambs vertical bands of sculpture. Perhaps the most interesting of the latter are the Nāgas and Nāginīs, half snakes and half human, with their tails intertwined.

The sanctum is a large room in which on a high pedestal stands the colossal image of Chennakēśava. Kesava. It is perfectly proportioned and is ideally designed according to the canons of Hindu art. The face is one of impressive grandeur and benevolent smile. The image is profusely ornamented and is supported on either side by Vishnu's consorts, Bhū or the Earth Goddess on his right and Sri or the Goddess of Prosperity on his left. He is four-handed and holds in addition to the conch and discus a lotus and a mace. On the pedestal is an inscription recording the consecration of the image by Vishnuvardhana Hoysala.

In the compound of the Chennakēśava temple there are more than a score of lesser structures of varying importance, but the Kappe-Chennigaraya temple which is directly to the south of the main temple is the most important of them all, having been built at the orders of Śāntalā dēvī, the chief queen of Vishnuvardhana, and consecrated in 1177 A.D. along with the main temple. Though smaller in size and less



BRACKET IMAGE—LADY DANCING.

ornamental, it resembles the main temple in its plan. In its hall there are five turreted niches which contain finely carved images of Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī, Lakshmī-Nārāyaṇa, Lakshmī, Śrīdhara and Durgā as Mahishāsura-mardini. In the last group, the goddess dances on the body of the beheaded buffalo as she fights the demons springing out of it. This is one of the finest sculptures in the whole temple. The ceilings are also highly interesting while the lintels show minute carving work. The image of Vēṇugōpāla or Kṛishṇa as the cow-herd which is now in the south cell is an unfinished later sculpture which has taken the place of the disappeared original image. The latter was very probably Lakshmī-Nārāyaṇa who is mentioned in the foundation inscriptions as having been installed at the same time as Chennakēśava and Kappe-Chennigarāya.

This last mentioned deity (Pl. VIII) which occupies the west cell is a magnificent image which gives us a proper idea of the excellence of art in the Hoysala times. Since its little finger is broken, it is not worshipped and thus affords an excellent opportunity for the public to study a first class Hindu image at close quarters. The majesty and beauty of the god practically embodying the ideals of the Hindu art canon and the exquisite taste of the ornamentation and setting can be noticed even by a casual observer.

The image is called in Kannada the 'Frog Chennigarāya,' and thereby goes a legend. It is said that a great sculptor Dakanāchārya made the image and when his son pointed out a flaw in the navel of the image, the father cut off his right hand.

There is a shrine for Lakshmī, the consort of Kēśava, built during the early Vijayanagar period out of the materials of ruined temples along with the large maṇṭapa behind it and the shrine of Āṇḍāl, the other consort. Many of the sculptures

7)

Saumyanayaki
Shrine.



BRACKET IMAGE—LADY DRESSING HER HAIR.

of both these temples appear to have been brought from some ruined Śiva temple which appears to have been one of great beauty and was probably known as Vishṇu-Īśvara.

The Viranārāyaṇa shrine, though a small building, is definitely a Hoysala structure of considerable artistic importance. It has a fine image of Nārāyaṇa somewhat damaged and on the outer walls there are a number of relief images some of which are really fine. One group on the north side wall of its hall shows Bhīma in the act of fighting the elephant of Bhagadatta, an enemy king. The movements of the hero and of the elephant are shown by carving them in different positions. It is a fine and vigorous composition.

Some of the sculptures on the walls of the Āṇḍāl shrine are very pleasingly executed. On its south wall is the beautiful image of Vēṇugōpāla carved by Bhaṇḍāri Madhuvanna who has signed his name (Pl. IX).

To the north of the Āṇḍāl shrine in the compound and protected by the verandah are now preserved various stray inscriptions and sculptures collected in and around the temple. In the north-east corner of the compound exists the stone built pond, Vāsudēva-tīrtha, which dates from the days of Ballāla II.

The Nāganāyakana-maṇṭapa which stood directly in front of the main temple was a structure of the Vijayanagar days for which some fine bell-shaped Hoysala pillars had been used. To its east was a small shrine of Garuḍa installed by Venkaṭādhri Nāyaka of Bēlūr. To further east was a brass-covered wooden pillar set up in the days of Kṛishṇa Dēvarāya of Vijayanagar. A little to the south of this group stood a Kalyāṇa-maṇṭapa



CHENNIGARAYA IMAGE.

with an image of Sugrīva. On the platform of the stone-pillar were two Gaṇēśa shrines. Some of these were accretional structures built in the Vijayanagar and later days out of materials collected from ruined temples. They were mostly in a very dilapidated condition and were removed recently, thus opening out the yard in front of the main temple.

Near the elephant gate and facing the Kappe-Chennigarāya image there was formerly a niche containing a relieve group of a royal couple identified as Vishṇuvardhana and Sāntalādēvī. The sculpture is now in the north maṇṭapa. Inside the temple, there is a copper image which is also pointed out as a statue of Vishṇuvardhana.

A few years ago this great monument was in a very unsatisfactory condition. The courtyard was covered with a large number of votive buildings and trees and several parts of the temple were found to be in danger. At the instance of the Archæological Department, the Government of Mysore undertook at immense cost the work of conservation on scientific lines. The wages expended for the purpose amount to about fifty thousand rupees, and the total value of the work done could be estimated at several lakhs. Thanks to the generosity of His Highness the Mahārāja Krishṇarājendra Wāḍiyar IV, the personal interest taken by the Dewan Sir Mirza Ismail and the devoted labours of the Renovation Committee, this great monument has been saved from ruin and restored as nearly as possible to the form it had in its most prosperous days.

The other things worth seeing in the place, if time permits, are: a fine large reservoir said to have been constructed by the early Hoysalas and several small ruined temples like

The Belur Tank.



those of Śaṅkarēśvara and Pātālēśvara on the west and east of the town respectively.

The political greatness of Bēlūr passed away long ago and the town is now an insignificant one; but its great temple and the work of its Hoysala architects and sculptors have made it a place of pilgrimage for the student of Art.

